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Draft report

Addendum

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Programme questions: evaluation (item 4 (c))

In-depth evaluation of the programme on disarmament

1. At its 3rd, 5th and 6th meetings, on 7, 8 and 9 June 1999, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the programme on disarmament transmitted to it under cover of a note by the Secretary-General (E/AC.51/1999/2).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the report and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the high quality of the report. As a result of the elaboration of the report and the consultation inherent to the process of internal oversight, the useful interaction prior to the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001 to cope with the findings of the Office of Internal Oversight Services was noted.

4. Representatives considered that the programme was of high priority. The decrease of resources available to it throughout the period under review raised concerns; the financial situation did not reflect the priority given to the programme by the General Assembly. It was noted that the fellowship programme, publications and the regional centres for peace and disarmament, in particular, had been affected by resource constraints. It was observed that funding the activities of the regional centres through voluntary contributions was not a satisfactory arrangement. The view was expressed that the report should have included a recommendation on support for the regional centres.

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5. Information was requested on the impact of the 1997 reorganization, assigning the responsibility of secretariat support to two different departments, the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

6. On the subject of mandated follow-up actions regarding multilateral disarmament agreements, it was recalled that it was the sovereign right of a State to decide whether it wished to sign and ratify an international agreement, and, in this regard, the United Nations Secretariat could only provide technical advice, if requested by a Member State. In respect of the promotion of ratification by the Secretariat, it was noted that the response of Member States to appeals by the Secretary-General was positive, and the view was expressed that he should take more of such initiatives in favour of disarmament. The view was expressed that verification activities were only a small part of the issue of treaty implementation.

7. The view was expressed that the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) was playing a useful role in carrying out independent research and that the Department for Disarmament Affairs should avoid duplicating its work. The view was expressed that budgetary support to UNIDIR should increase. It was observed that the regular budget appropriations should not be used to fund independent institutes.

8. Representatives who had participated in the fellowship programme confirmed the good performance of the programme as evaluated in the report. The view was expressed that ways should be found to strengthen the fellowship programme.

9. Regarding the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations, it was recalled that the deliberative and negotiating functions of the multilateral disarmament machinery were the prerogative of Governments. In this respect, it was also recalled that the participation of non-governmental organizations was encouraged by Member States and took the form of contributions to data banks and information made available to delegations, as well as exchange of views with government representatives in formal and informal forums.

10. The Committee noted that, since 1992, because of budgetary constraints, the number of publications produced by the disarmament programme had been reduced. The view was expressed that the trend of discontinuing publications was regrettable. The Committee stressed the importance of *The United Nations Disarmament Yearbook* for the work of government representatives.

11. The view was expressed that the decision of the Secretariat to discontinue publications that duplicated those published elsewhere was a positive step, and that, in general, the programme should focus on areas where there was demonstrated need. The need to enhance the dissemination of information was recognized.

12. The view was expressed that the evaluation should have included not only the achievements in the field of disarmament but also the failures and shortcomings.

13. The view was also expressed that reference should have been made in paragraph 8 of the report to:

(a) The decision taken by the Conference on Disarmament on the establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate, on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices;

(b) The failure of the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

14. With regard to section V.D, on an integrated approach to peace and security, the view was expressed that the Secretariat should use those concepts which enjoyed consensus.

15. In the course of the debate, the following observations were made about the recommendations:

(a) *Recommendation 1*. It was stated that the Committee was not the appropriate forum in which to address budgetary issues. The view was expressed that the Committee had the mandate to address any matter related to the budget. The view was also expressed that, in accordance with the mandate of the Office of Internal Oversight Services established in General Assembly resolution 48/218 B, the Office should not make budgetary recommendations. It was noted that the evaluation report had been drafted before the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001.

(b) *Recommendation 2*. Reservations were made on the added value that the provision of additional information by the Department for Disarmament Affairs in reports submitted to the First Committee would offer.

(c) *Recommendation 3 (b)*. It was stated that paragraph 114 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly did not provide a mandate for the activity envisaged in this recommendation. It was also observed that the Department for Disarmament Affairs did not have any mandate to facilitate the exchange of experience between treaty implementing bodies.

(d) *Recommendation 4*. It was stated that requests for studies and technical information should follow the appropriate procedures in place.

(e) *Recommendation 6*. The view was expressed that, while the Department for Disarmament Affairs should be given access to the databases of other Secretariat departments, there was no mandate for providing the Department with access to databases being maintained by organizations like IAEA, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. In most cases, there were strict confidentiality rules covering the data available to those organizations. Any such proposal would need to be cleared by the First Committee, the General Assembly and the appropriate organs of other international organizations concerned.

(f) *Recommendation 7 (b)*. It was stated that the Department for Disarmament Affairs did not have any mandate to maintain institutionalized working-level contacts with other organizations involved in disarmament-related programmes. Such a programme would have to obtain approval from the First Committee and the General Assembly, the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the General Conference of IAEA, etc. Even after mandates were obtained, the process would need to be under some kind of intergovernmental oversight mechanism.

(g) *Recommendation 8*. It was stated that new measures for the dissemination of information should be well targeted, and should include performance indicators and regular evaluations. The view was expressed that the involvement of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters in the formulation of an information strategy was not required.

Conclusions and recommendations

16. The Committee expressed concern at the late issuance of the report and emphasized that such reports should be submitted in accordance with the six-week rule in future.

17. The Committee reiterated the importance that Member States attach to the programme, which is one of the eight priority areas of work of the Organization identified by the General Assembly in the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001.

18. The Committee highlighted the importance of the regional centres for peace and disarmament. The Committee requested the Secretary-General to take appropriate action to strengthen the centres and make them more effective, so as to achieve their objectives.

19. The Committee emphasized that the resource proposals should be submitted only through established procedures to the relevant bodies, in accordance with the relevant regulations and rules and resolutions of the General Assembly.

20. The assistance provided to parties to multilateral agreements was noted with appreciation.

21. The Committee noted the importance of the participation of non-governmental organizations in the general debate in the disarmament forums. The Committee recalled that the deliberative and negotiating functions of the multilateral disarmament machinery were the prerogative of Governments.

22. The Committee was pleased with the good performance of the fellowship programme.

23. The Committee endorsed recommendations 4, 5 and 7 (a).

24. The Committee also recommended, in connection with recommendation 3 (a), that in keeping with existing legal provisions regarding the role of the Secretariat, and in collaboration with relevant treaty organizations and regional organizations, the Department for Disarmament Affairs should facilitate the exchange of information between interested States and undertake, at the request of Governments, advisory services and technical assistance relating to the ratification of disarmament treaties.

25. The Committee further recommended, in connection with recommendation 6, that arrangements be worked out between the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the other relevant Secretariat departments to facilitate access by the Department to disarmament-related information contained in their databases.